

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 04484 210420Z

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 L-03 INR-07 IO-10 EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 829

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 4484

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT KS

SUBJECT: VISIT TO BISHOP CHI HAK-SUN

1. THROUGH ARRANGEMENT INITIATED BY AMERICAN CATHOLIC FATHER, LABATT CALLED ON BISHOP CHI HAK-SUN OF WONJU AT JESUIT RETREAT NEAR ANYANG. BISHOP APPEARED DEPRESSED, SAYING THAT ROLE OF CHURCHES IN STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS HAD COME VIRTUALLY TO AN END. THE COUNTRY WAS GOVERNED BY REIGN OF FEAR. HE FELT THAT EVERYONE, EVEN POLICE, INCREASINGLY FEARED AND RESENTED THE SYSTEM. HE THEREFORE CONCERNED THAT CURRENT SITUATION IF PERMITTED TO CONTINUE WOULD BRING KOREA TO SAME LEVEL OF REGIMENTATION AS NORTH KOREA AND TO EVENTUAL COLLAPSE. BISHOP FELT THAT THE US SHOULD MAKE ROKG UNDERSTAND DANGER OF PRESENT COURSE OF KOREAN POLICY.

2. BISHOP ASSERTED THAT EXPERIENCE DURING LAST YEAR HAD PROVEN THAT WHILE KOREAN PEOPLE ABLE TO ABSORB TREMENDOUS SUFFERING, THEY ARE ESSENTIALLY WEAK AND SOFT INSIDE AND SUCCUMB EASILY UNDER PRESSURE. COLLAPSE OF OPPOSITION AND OF CHURCH STRUGGLE POINT UP HOW EASILY EVERYTHING COULD COLLAPSE HERE. RESENTMENTS WERE NOT ONLY POLITICAL, BUT ALSO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC. HE SAID THAT SINCE HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON HE HEARD CONSTANTLY OF RURAL DISCONTENT OVER LAND PROBLEMS,  
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RISING COSTS, LACK OF FUNDS, AND GOVERNMENT CONTROL OVER

EVERYTHING. THERE WAS NO LOYALTY TO THE PRESENT SYSTEM,  
ONLY FEAR.

3. BISHOP CHI THEN TURNED TO HIS OWN STATUS AND WELFARE,  
SAYING THAT HE WAS CONSTANTLY WATCHED, HIS CONVERSATIONS  
MONITORED, AND HIS VISITORS CHECKED. HE HESITATED  
EVEN TO ASK PEOPLE TO CONTACT HIM, EXCEPT ON OFFICIAL  
CHURCH BUSINESS, IN ORDER NOT TO INCRIMINATE THEM. THE  
ONLY ROLE PERMITTED HIM NOW WAS TO CONDUCT RELIGIOUS  
SERVICES. HE HAD APPLIED FOR A PASSPORT TO RESPOND TO  
INVITATIONS TO GO TO ROME AND GERMANY, BUT HAD SO FAR BEEN  
UNABLE TO GET IT NOR EVEN AN OFFICIAL REFUSAL.

4. IN TALKING AND WALKING WITH LABATT ON RETREAT GROUNDS,  
BISHOP, WHO CLEARLY HAD LOST MUCH WEIGHT, APPEARED  
NEVERTHELESS VIGOROUS ENOUGH AND IN REASONABLY GOOD  
HEALTH, BUT COMMENTED THAT HIS LEFT ARM WAS VERY PAINFUL  
AND INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO USE, NOTWITHSTANDING CONSTANT  
MEDICAL TREATMENT. ON SAYING GOODBYE, BISHOP THANKED LABATT  
FOR VISIT AND EXPRESSED THAT SOMEHOW, SOME DAY, US COULD  
AGAIN PLAY ROLE IN RESTORATION OF FREEDOM AND HUMAN  
RIGHTS IN KOREA.  
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## Message Attributes

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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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